

Message Text

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53

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 ORM-02 DHA-02 SY-05 SCCT-01

OPR-02 ACDA-05 SCS-03 SCA-01 /094 W

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O R 061455Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7988

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK

COMMSIXTHFLT

CTF SIX ZERO

CTF SIX ONE

CTF SIX TWO

CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA

DIA WASHDC

CIA WASHDC

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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 00123 061634Z

CONFIDENTIAL BEIRUT 0123

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: TEL ZAATAR CONFRONTATION STILL ON; KARAME CALLS FOR PRO-
LONGATION OF PARLIAMENTARY TERM

REF: BEIRUT 0072 (1445Z)

1. SUMMARY: CONTINUED REFUSAL OF CHRISTIAN RIGHTISTS TO LET SUPPLIES ENTER TEL ZAATAR REFUGEE CAMP KEEPING TENSION UP. KIDNAPPING AND LOOTING ARE STILL WIDESPREAD IN CAPITAL. PREMIER KARAME HAS STATED PUBLICLY THAT PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS CANNOT BE HELD NEXT SPRING BECAUSE OF INSECURITY AND HE HAS CALLED FOR EXTENSION OF PARLIAMENT'S MANDATE. END SUMMARY.

2. THE CONFRONTATION CONTINUES BETWEEN THE KATEAB PARTY AND ITS CHRISTIAN ALLIES, ON ONE HAND, AND PALESTINIANS, ON OTHER, OVER ISSUE OF ALLOWING SUPPLIES TO ENTER TEL ZAATAR REFUGEE CAMP IN EASTERN BEIRUT SUBURB. AN AGREEMENT SUPPOSEDLY REACHED NIGHT JAN 5 BROKE DOWN EARLY MORNING JAN 6 WHEN GUNMEN IN PREDOMINANTLY CHRISTIAN QUARTER OF FURN ASH-SHUBBAK FIRED ON TWO TRUCKS ESCORTED BY SECURITY FORCES BELIEVED HEADED FOR THE CAMP. TRUCKS WERE PUT OUT OF ACTION. NO ESCALATION AS RESULT OF THIS INCIDENT IS YET APPARENT, DESPITE REPORTS OF SPORADIC SHOOTING IN BEIRUT AREA LAST 24 HOURS, BUT ALL OBSERVERS RECOGNIZE POTENTIAL FOR SERIOUS TROUBLE IN THIS UNRESOLVED PROBLEM. PRO-PALESTINIAN PAPERS "AL-MUHARRIR/ AND "AL-SHARQ" COMMENTED JAN 6 THAT RIGHTISTS ARE USING THIS INCIDENT TO DRAG PALESTINIANS INTO LEBANESE FRAY, AN INDICATION THAT PALESTINIANS ARE TRYING TO AVOID MAJOR FIGHT OVER THE ISSUE.

3. WIDESPREAD KIDNAPPING AND LOOTING CONTINUE IN CAPITAL AREA, ALSO CONTRIBUTING TO RISING TENSION. HOWEVER, CITY IS STILL STRUGGLING TO MAINTAIN SEMBLANCE OF NORMAL LIFE. TRAFFIC IS GENERALLY LIGHT TO MODERATE. MOST AREAS ARE QUIET AS OF MID-DAY JAN 6.

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4. ON POLITICAL FRONT, PREMIER KARAME MADE SURPRISE STATEMENT IN INTERVIEW EVENING JAN 5 THAT PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS CANNOT POSSIBLY BE HELD THIS SPRING BECAUSE OF SECURITY SITUATION, AND THEREFORE THE PRESENT PARLIAMENT SHOULD MOVE TO EXTEND ITS TERM TO AVOID CONSTITUTIONAL VACUUM. (LENGTH OF PARLIAMENTARY TERM IS STATUTORY, NOT CONSTITUTIONAL, MATTER AND CAN BE ADJUSTED BY SIMPLE ACT OF PARLIAMENT.) DRAFT BILL IS BEING PREPARED BY DEPUTY FROM CHAMOUN'S NATIONAL

LIBERAL PARTY THAT WOULD EXTEND PARLIAMENTARY TERM FOR ONE YEAR (TO MAY 3, 1977). CABINET IS EXPECTED TO DISCUSS THIS PROPOSITION IN ITS REGULAR MEETING JAN 7.

5. DESPITE THIS STRONG SUPPORT FROM MODERATE MUSLIM SIDE, SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE IDEA OF EXTENDING PARLIAMENTARY TERM LIKELY TO FACE OPPOSITION OF EXTREME LEFT. A KEY ISSUE THAT LEFT MIGHT SEIZE UPON HERE IS WHETHER NEW PRESIDENT WOULD BE ELECTED BY PRESENT PARLIAMENT BEFORE OR AFTER PROLONGATION DATE OF MANDATE. IF ELECTION OCCURRED AFTER, AS SCHEDULED, EXTREME LEFT MIGHT CLAIM NEW PRESIDENT'S ELECTION NOT "LEGAL". AN ELECTION PRIOR TO PROLONGATION DATE WOULD REQUIRE FRANGIE RESIGNATION--A MOVE FOR WHICH THERE IS MUCH SENTIMENT, BUT NOT IN PRESIDENCY.

6. ELSEWHERE ON POLITICAL SCENE, KARAME PAID CALL JAN 5 ON KAMAL JUMBLATT TO EXPRESS CONDOLENCE FOR RECENT DEATH OF LATTER'S COUSIN. GESTURE BEING TAKEN AS RECONCILIATION MOVE BETWEEN THE TWO LEADERS, WHOSE RELATIONS HAVE BEEN COOL. AMONG OTHER THINGS, JUMBLATT EXTRAVAGANTLY PRAISED RAYMOND EDDE, A POLITICAL ALLY OF KARAME'S. JUMBLATT DEPARTED LATER IN DAY ON TRIP TO SAUDI ARABIA.
GODLEY

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Message Attributes

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